

There is currently a window of opportunity that should not be allowed to close without an agreement being reached on the CBMs. They provide real benefits to both communities, not least of which is that they can form the base from which the two parties could resume discussions on an overall settlement.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Claiborne Pell, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

## Interview on MTV's "Enough is Enough" Forum April 19, 1994

*Tabitha Soren.* Welcome to MTV's "Enough is Enough" Forum with the President of the United States, Bill Clinton. Joining the President is an audience of 200 16- to 20-year-olds from here in DC and all over the country. Obviously, there are a lot of issues on the President's mind today, including some hard decisions on the U.S. role in Bosnia. But we've invited him here to talk about violence in America.

*Alison Stewart.* "Enough is Enough" is a comprehensive campaign put forth by MTV to explore the subject of violence, giving young people an outlet for their concerns and bringing them closer to the people who can bring about a change.

"Enough is Enough" is also the cry of a generation of young people who, according to an MTV poll, specify violence as their number one concern, surpassing the economy and job opportunity.

*Ms. Soren.* Despite the fact that violence is young people's number one anxiety, the country's crime rate has actually gone down in recent years. However, violent crime committed by young people has exploded. We are losing a whole generation to crime, to drugs, to lost hopes.

*Mr. President.*

*The President.* Thank you, Tabitha and Alison. Thank all of you for joining me, and I want to thank MTV for giving me a chance to keep my commitment to come back on the show, to talk about something I care a lot about: the rising tide of violence in America, especially among young people.

As you heard, the crime rate overall in our country has pretty well leveled off, but it's still going up among young people. Young people are the principal perpetrators of violent crime;

young people are also the principal victims of violent crime.

You may have seen the public service announcement I did with a young teenager from here in Washington, Alicia Brown. And on the day we taped this announcement and then the day we announced it, she was on her way to the funeral of her sixth friend who had been felled by gun violence. It's a terrible problem.

I want to talk today about what we can do about it together. In Washington, we're debating a crime bill that I care a lot about, which will put more police officers on the street, working with young people in their community; which will give a whole range of prevention programs that work a chance to work in every community, everything from after-school programs to midnight basketball to jobs for young people. We are seeing that work in places, so that I know it will work if we can put it everywhere.

But I have to tell you, no matter what we do with the laws, we have to have a change in behavior and attitude and feeling among young people all across this country, in every community in the country. And maybe we can talk a little about that today, too.

I met a young man about a week ago, named Eddie Cutanda, from Boston, who was working with the Boston police in their community policing program. And he said, before he met these two men, he hated police officers. But he wanted me to know and he wanted the country to know that he did not represent a lost generation. He said of all of you, he said, "We're not a lost generation, but sometimes I think there are a lot of adults who'd like to lose us, and we can't let that happen."

So, today, maybe together we can figure out what we can do about this awful problem and give you and your generation your future back.

*Ms. Soren.* Okay, Mr. President, let's get down to it. We've got our first question over here. Tell us who you are and what your question for the President is.

#### *Teen Suicide*

[A 17-year-old participant discussed the feelings of hopelessness and despair many young people experience and asked what could be done to help them understand how important their lives are.]

*The President.* Well, first of all, you asked a good question. Maybe the question you asked is the most important question. Suicide among young people, as you probably know, has doubled in the last 10 or 15 years. And it reflects a larger problem of millions of young people who don't commit suicide.

I think it is rooted in part in the fact that there are a lot of young folks who grow up never feeling that they're the most important person in the world to somebody. I know—there were times in my childhood when I had a difficult childhood, but I always knew I was the most important person in the world to my mother and that somehow together we would get through whatever we were going through.

With so many kids growing up in difficult family circumstances, in violent neighborhoods where there's so much destructive things around, including drugs, my own opinion is that we have to really make an effort to reach children when they're very young but not to give up on them when they're adolescents and they're going through the toughest times of life, so that they always know that they matter.

The other thing we've got to do is to somehow get out of this sort of instant emergency way we tend to look at life. I mean, we all have more information today, more access to information than any generation before us. You can turn on the television and see 50 channels in a lot of the communities where you live. We've got a lot of information, but we think everything happens right now. And the truth is, a lot of things take a long time to unfold; a lot of the meaning of life takes a long time to develop.

And one of the things that I find—to go back to your comment about young gang members

not expecting to live very long—is that I find a lot of young people think the future is what happens 30 minutes from now or 3 days from now, instead of what happens 5 or 10 or 15 years from now. And somehow, the adults in this country—we have to find a way to help young people think in a hopeful way about 5 and 10 and 15 years from now and understand that there are sacrifices and tough times and disappointments that never go away in life. They never go away no matter how old you are and how much you get things together. But if you can keep your eye on the future, then suicide doesn't become an option because you know there can always be a better tomorrow.

So those are the two things I think we have to do: Teach people they're the most—everybody needs to be the most important person in the world to somebody. And people need to think of the future in terms of the real future, what happens years from now, not what happens minutes or days from now.

*Ms. Soren.* What's your question for the President?

#### *Crime and Individual Freedom*

[A participant discussed Singapore's sentencing of an American student to be caned and asked if a similar penal system that was not based on a strong belief in individual rights would be beneficial in combating U.S. crime.]

*The President.* Well, that's not where I thought you were going with the question. Good for you.

*Ms. Soren.* He's obviously talking about the caning in Singapore.

*The President.* Yes—the young man, Michael Fay, in Singapore. As you know, I have spoken out against his punishment for two reasons. One is, it's not entirely clear that his confession wasn't coerced from him. The second is that if he just were to serve 4 months in prison for what he did, that would be quite severe. But the caning may leave permanent scars, and some people who are caned, in the way they're caned, they go into shock. I mean, it's much more serious than it sounds. So, on the one hand, I don't approve of this punishment, particularly in this case.

Now, having said that, a lot of the Asian societies that are doing very well now have low crime rates and high economic growth rates, partly because they have very coherent societies

with strong units where the unit is more important than the individual, whether it's the family unit or the work unit or the community unit.

My own view is that you can go to the extreme in either direction. And when we got organized as a country and we wrote a fairly radical Constitution with a radical Bill of Rights, giving a radical amount of individual freedom to Americans, it was assumed that the Americans who had that freedom would use it responsibly. That is, when we set up this country, abuse of people by Government was a big problem. So if you read the Constitution, it's rooted in the desire to limit the ability of—Government's ability to mess with you, because that was a huge problem. It can still be a huge problem. But it assumed that people would basically be raised in coherent families, in coherent communities, and they would work for the common good, as well as for the individual welfare.

What's happened in America today is too many people live in areas where there's no family structure, no community structure, and no work structure. And so there's a lot of irresponsibility. And so a lot of people say there's too much personal freedom. When personal freedom's being abused, you have to move to limit it. That's what we did in the announcement I made last weekend on the public housing projects, about how we're going to have weapon sweeps and more things like that to try to make people safer in their communities. So that's my answer to you. We can have—the more personal freedom a society has, the more personal responsibility a society needs and the more strength you need out of your institutions, family, community, and work.

*[At this point, MTV took a commercial break, after which a videotape about proposed anticrime legislation was shown. A participant then praised the Brady law and asked what the President proposed to do about the flow of illegal guns into the Nation.]*

#### *Handgun Legislation*

*The President.* Well, first, let's get that out—the Brady bill is working. It is true that you can still buy an illegal gun with cash in the streets. But it's also true that a lot of people with criminal backgrounds try to buy guns in regular gun stores, and now they're being checked. And it's really working to prevent the

sale of guns to a lot of criminals. So it doesn't solve all the problems, but it helps.

Now, in terms of stemming the flow of illegal guns into the country, we can do things that I have already done, for example, to ban the import of certain guns in the country. The big problem is the number of guns we have in the country already and what happens to them. They're already about 200 million guns in circulation. And there are still a lot of things that are legal that shouldn't be.

There is a horrible—I mean, to me—story on the cover of USA Today about people making automatic weapons in the United States saying, well, you know, if one of these automatic weapons gets taken out from under a bed and used by some kid illegally, it's not their problem.

I think we should ban the—several kinds of semiautomatic assault weapons. I think we should pass the ban on handgun possession by minors, unless they're with an adult supervisor and using it for approved sporting purposes. I think we should go further in trying to regulate what these gun dealers do with these guns because they will—sometimes they put them in circulation in ways they know they're going to wind up in the hands of criminals. All these things we're moving to do now. Will it solve all the problems? No, it won't. Is it a step in the right direction? Yes, it is.

And you cannot—one of reasons we've got the highest crime rate in the world and the highest murder rate is that we have more guns in the hands of more criminals and people who are likely to act in an impulsive manner. You can't—and there's no place else in the world where this would happen, where you'd have just people walking the streets better armed than the police. It's not right, and we've got to do something about it.

*[A participant asked why so much money was spent to make it difficult for law-abiding citizens to obtain guns legally, rather than to enforce criminal justice.]*

*The President.* Well, first, we are doing that. I mean, this plan of mine—you heard the young people commenting about debating whether 100,000 more police officers will make a difference. It will make a difference. It will not only catch more criminals, it will prevent more crime. We know that when you have police walking the streets, knowing the families, knowing the kids in the neighborhood, making their

presence felt, the crime rate goes down. We also know you catch more criminals more quickly. The crime bill actually puts more people in prison. So there are a lot of issues being dealt with there.

But keep in mind the restrictions that are put on gun ownership in terms of having to have background checks and waiting periods to catch people with criminal records. One hundred percent of the criminals in this country do not buy their guns off street corners. A lot of them buy them through gun stores, and we're going to catch those now. So it's worth doing. It's worth a little bit of sacrifice on the part of law-abiding gun owners to do that.

#### *Anticrime Legislation*

*[Following a commercial break, a participant asked to whom the "three strikes and you're out" proposal would apply and how many people it would affect.]*

*The President.* Well, I hope only a small number of people. Let me answer your question in this way: First of all, a small percentage of the criminal population—of the criminal population—commits a large percentage of the truly violent crimes. A lot of those folks, they're "one strike and you're out." You commit murder or rape or something else, you get a life sentence.

The "three strikes and you're out" bill is designed to deny parole to people who commit three violent crimes in a row where, by accident, the consequence was not as serious as it might have been. That is, no one died or the building didn't burn down or whatever, so the victims weren't hurt as badly. But this is a person who is plainly prone to do things that will cause life or serious bodily harm. So it will cover—the reason that I recommend coverage—it doesn't cover drug offenders, for example. It covers people who do things that are designed to hurt people repeatedly, and they're just lucky that nobody has died, so they haven't gotten a life sentence. But if they do it three times, they still have to serve unless they are specifically commuted; they're not eligible for parole.

*Ms. Soren.* So does that mean it ends up affecting about 200 to 300 people a year?

*The President.* It wouldn't affect many people. But as I said, we know that a small percentage of the people are serious repeat offenders. A small percentage of the criminals are serious repeat offenders. And if this is drawn right, it

will make us safer at relatively lower costs. A lot of people go to jail when they ought to do something else, go to a boot camp, be in some alternative sentencing. Arguably, we have too many of certain kinds of offenders in jail, but there are some people who get out too quickly, like that man that kidnaped and killed Polly Klaas, for example.

*Ms. Soren.* "Three strikes and you're out" is so popular, but a lot of critics say that perhaps the jails will fill up with 60-, 70-year-old men and women past their crime-producing life. Do you think that's smart?

*The President.* Well, it could happen, but let me say that in many States today—in my State, for example, where I'm from, if you get a life sentence you can't get out unless you get parole commuted by the Governor, anyway. So about 10 percent of our prison population are people on life sentences. It is rare for people over 70 to commit those serious crimes. It sometimes happens. If they are clearly not a danger to society, they ought to be able to make their case and get their sentence commuted.

*[A participant asked about prevention of violent crime in communities where children think violence is the only way to solve problems.]*

*The President.* Perhaps the best thing about this crime bill from that point of view is that this is the first crime bill in my lifetime that—as far as I know, anyway—that has a huge amount of money allocated to crime prevention, to programs that work in the neighborhoods, for example, before and after school programs, programs to keep young people active, programs to give young people jobs in the summertime or after school, programs to give people something to say yes to, not just tell them something to say no to.

There's also a huge amount of money in this crime bill for drug and alcohol education and prevention, as well as treatment. And there's some money in there that can be—for example, suppose in your community you've got an innovative project that you want to try. Under this crime bill, the States and the localities will be able to have the flexibility to try some things that they know work and expand them.

One other thing I want to say—just to put a plug in because it hadn't come up yet—I believe that a lot of the violence that happens among young people your age and younger, where people just pull out knives or guns and

shoot each other because they've been fighting over something—I think people can be educated out of that. There's a lot of evidence that you can teach young people who grow up in tough environments that there are other ways to solve their problems other than shooting or cutting up each other or beating each other. And there's some money in this crime bill to do that in schools all across this country. I also think that's very, very important.

#### Prisons

[A participant about changing the correctional system so that petty criminals do not become immune to it and become worse after being released.]

*The President.* Well, first of all, you're echoing what was on one of the earlier film segments, that a lot of young people do not fear going to prison. A lot of them come out of prison just better trained criminals.

I think there are two things that we have to focus on. First of all, if you do a crime, you've got to expect to either do some time or be punished for it. You can't stop the system of having consequences for destructive behavior. But I think there are two things we can do. Number one, there ought to be alternatives to prison for first-time nonviolent offenders. People ought to get a chance to do something else that connects them to the community and gives them the future. Number two, if young people do go to prison and they're going to be paroled, and most everybody does get paroled, then they shouldn't be paroled unless, in prison, there is a good program for alcohol and drug abuse prevention, there is a good program for education and training, there's a good program, in other words, to prepare people to reenter society and be more successful, instead of just preparing them to do what they used to do, better.

If all you do is go to the penitentiary and you deal with people who are tougher than you are, who are better fighters than you are, and you spend 2 hours a day in a weight room pumping iron, then when you get out, you're just prepared to do what you used to do better than you did before you got in. So we have to change the way people spend their time in prison, and we've got to divert as many first offenders as we can from prison the first time in community-based settings and boot camps and things like that.

#### Community Programs

[At this point, Ms. Stewart introduced a videotape on community programs designed to help children before they turn to crime. A participant then asked how youth could be persuaded to give up drug profits.]

*The President.* Well, I think there are only two ways that a teenager who has a chance to make that kind of money won't do it. And maybe you need them both. One is that all the teenager's peers and family members and friends and everybody else needs to always say that this is wrong, and the teenager needs to believe it's wrong. Keep in mind, most of us obey the law most of the time not because we think we're going to get caught, but because we think it's wrong.

The second thing is we need to do a better job of making people think there is a real price. When somebody gets into something like that for serious money, then we have to do what we can to cut it off. We have to try to be more effective on the law enforcement end, and not just with the people like the teenager but with the people that are supplying them with the dope and the money, the bigger people. And we've got to try to be better at that. And of course, we're trying to give ourselves some resources to do that better, too, in this crime bill.

But I don't think it's very complicated. I think you either—if you're doing the wrong thing for money, you've either got to stop it because you think it's wrong or because you think you're going to get caught and you don't want to pay the price. And if you can't—if you don't have those two things, it's not very good.

Now, let me make one other point. I think also there has to be more hope. I think the midnight basketball and all those things are great. I really support them. And funding for them is in our crime bill. But I also think there has to be a longer term hope, that maybe you won't have \$1,500 in your pocket living a straight life tomorrow, but if you go back to school, you can get an education, and there will be a decent job and a good life for you over the long run and there will be more money at less risk with more happiness over the long run. Those are the things I think we have to do.

[A participant asked about funding to start a community center in east Baltimore.]

*The President.* First, there might be some funding through the Housing and Urban Development Department. And I would urge you to write Secretary Cisneros about that or give me something on it now. Secondly, your community, if they would support it, your local community could ask for funding through this crime bill prevention strategy to do it.

I think it's very important. These community centers can make a huge difference, especially if the tenants support them, if the adults as well as the kids support them. But I think that you should be able to get some support for that from one of those two sources.

Mayor Schmoke in Baltimore has been extremely active in the whole housing area. He's done some of the most innovative and impressive things in the country, and there may be, for all I know, some help the city government itself can give you. But if you'll give me your name and address at the end of the program, I'll see what I can do to help.

#### Television Violence

[A participant asked why the Attorney General and the Congress were focusing on TV violence when real violence was such a problem.]

*The President.* I don't know that the Attorney General and the Congress want a law—at least I don't think a majority of the Congress wants a law to limit what can be on television. But there is some evidence that the accumulated exposure to random violence over years and years and years by a generation of young people who watch far more television than their predecessors did has some effect on people's willingness to then go out and recreate what they've been exposed to on television.

Now, I'm not against all violence in movies and TV. I thought—for example, I thought that movie “Boyz N' the Hood” was a great movie, because—it was a very violent movie, but it showed you the real—it was a true movie. I mean, it showed you what the horrible consequences to life and to family was of that kind of behavior.

But I think what bothers people about television is not so much this or that or the other program but the overall impact of watching several hours a day every day and just one violent scene after another coming at you. If you start

doing that when you're about 5 years old, by the time you're 15, 16, or 17, there may be a whole lot of messages in your mind that may make you more prone to be violent, again, if you don't have an off-setting influence from the family, the school, the church, the community, some other place. That is the concern. It is not that there are bad people doing the television or that one program or two, in and of themselves, can make a difference. The question is whether the overall impact of it makes young people more likely to be violent.

#### Public Trust in Government

[A participant cited the frustration and anger young people felt toward Government bureaucracy and asked if the administration would keep its promises and make a difference.]

*The President.* Well, all I can say is you just have to watch and see. Insofar as the Congress has worked with me, we've been able to do a large number of the things that I said I'd do when I ran for President. I came on MTV, and we talked about the motor voter bill; we signed it after years of not signing it. It took—for 7 years the Brady bill was hung up in Congress. When I became President, we passed it; we signed it. The national service bill was something I ran on, trying to get young people like you interested in community service and then allowing you, in return for that community service, to earn money against a college education. It was passed and signed.

So we're able—we are making progress on the commitments I made to the American people in general and to the young people of this country. We redid the student loan program, so now you can pay a loan back—college loan back as a percentage of your income. So I'm trying to do what I say I'll do. All I can tell you is—this is a general rule—cynicism is a cop-out because once you become cynical and you say somebody else is not going to do something, that lets you off the hook. And in the end, we can only go forward if we believe in each other, until we understand we can't believe in each other anymore.

So I would plead with you—it's a very fair question. You've got a lot of reasons to be disappointed. But we can make a difference if we work at it together. And neither you nor I will be able to do everything we want to do, but

we can do a lot of the things we should do if we'll get to work on it.

*Whitewater and Vietnam Draft*

*Ms. Soren.* Mr. President, you speak so passionately and directly about issues like violence and education. But why is it, when the issues pertain to you personally, like the draft or Whitewater, that people seem to get the idea that you're giving them less than a straight answer, even when you have nothing to hide?

*The President.* Well, first of all, I think it's hard to know what the rules are; they keep raising the bar. Let me just give you a real answer to that. I was asked by the press and the Republicans to agree to a special counsel on Whitewater, right, even though there were—no one had accused me of doing anything wrong, and therefore there was no ground, traditionally, to have a Special Counsel. Everybody said, "Prove your innocence." In a country where people are presumed innocent, the President isn't. You've got to go prove your innocence, even though no one's accused you of anything wrong. So I agreed. I said okay, we'll have a Special Counsel.

Then, in past Special Counsels, Presidents have resisted subpoenas, applied things like executive privilege. I cooperated entirely. And the Watergate Special Counsel said we were a big departure from the past; this administration has totally cooperated.

The press keeps saying, "Well, we said 'Special Counsel,' but now we want to ask questions anyway. And you've got to have all the answers right now, and if you don't, you're not being forthcoming." Well, I couldn't remember everything I was asked. It's been a long time since you had somebody who's given you 17 years worth of tax returns, for example. But I don't think it's fair to say we haven't been candid.

Now, maybe in the beginning I didn't want to just shut the Government down and just do Whitewater. And I still don't. But I have tried to be as honest as I could. I also, frankly, have questions. I don't think just because you become President that everything all of a sudden should be subject to answering.

I disagree on the draft; I did my best to be candid. And that's another interesting thing, the person that made the draft charge against me was the person who changed his story. Not me, I didn't change mine; somebody else changed theirs.

*Ms. Soren.* I think what angers young people about Whitewater is the fact that it seems like it's slowing down all of the other important issues that they want to get through.

*The President.* I think that does bother you, but you shouldn't worry about that, at least not now, because the reason I agreed to have a Special Counsel look into it is so anybody who asks me a question, I can say, "I'm going to give it all to the Special Counsel. If I did anything wrong, he'll find out," so that it wouldn't slow us down.

And let me just say, this year already, we've signed a major education bill to try to improve public schools in America and set world-class standards for all our schools. We are proceeding at a very rapid rate on the crime bill. We are proceeding toward passing a budget at the most rapid rate in recent memory, which, if it passes, will lower the Government's deficit for 3 years in a row for the first time since Harry Truman was President. We are proceeding on health care reform. So we are moving ahead.

So far, the work of the Congress has not been diverted, and the work of the Presidency has not been diverted. I know it may be hard—you can't tell, in other words, from the news coverage that, but that's the truth. And we're not going to let it be diverted if we can possibly help it.

*Violence in Schools*

[*Ms. Stewart introduced a videotape on guns at school. A participant then described the shooting of a teacher in his school and asked when funding would be available for metal detectors.*]

*The President.* In the crime bill there's about \$300 million for safe schools. And the money will be given out to the schools that have a demonstrated need for it. So I would urge you to apply for the money.

I don't know what all of your reaction to all this was, but I remember when we all started going through metal detectors to get on airplanes, a lot of people were upset. Now everybody just does it as a matter of course. I think until we get guns out of the hands of our young people, every school that needs it ought to have whatever security is needed to take care of that. You ought to be safe at school. Then you've got the problem of going to and from school. That's what the community policing is supposed

to take care of. But I think every school that needs it ought to have this kind of security. People should be safe in the school, and they ought to know when they get there they're going to be safe.

#### Bosnia

[Following a commercial break, a participant stated that she voted for the President because he had indicated he would not let ethnic cleansing continue in Bosnia, and she expressed frustration with current administration policy.]

*The President.* Well, first of all, go back and talk about everything I said. I also said that the United States should not enter the war, a civil war, on the side of the Bosnian Government. I said that the United States should not put its troops there to get involved in what was a centuries-old conflict. But we should do what we could to stop the fighting and to stop ethnic cleansing. So you have to tell the whole story; if you're going to give my campaign commitment, give the whole thing.

I advocated having NATO's air power put at the service of the Bosnian Government to stop aggression by the Serbs and lifting the arms embargo. The United Nations was in Bosnia. Our United Nations allies, France and Britain, would not support lifting the arms embargo. It took me from the time I took office until August to get NATO committed to use their air power to try to stop the aggression; they did. Then, finally, we began to do that.

Now look what's happened. In 15 months, which may seem like a long time, but is not such a long time, we now have finally relieved the siege of Sarajevo, and the Croats and the Muslims have gotten together in an agreement. The Serbs are doing what they've always done; they're just trying to get as much land as they can for greater Serbia.

We're doing what we can, but everything we do, we do through the United Nations or through NATO. I have never favored—I was explicit in the campaign—unilateral United States action. If we do that, if we go into Bosnia all by ourselves, say, "We know what's right, nobody else does," then why should any other nation ever work with us through the United Nations? Why should the nations who don't agree with the embargo on Iraq that we imposed go along with it?

So I think we have done the best we could with a very difficult situation when we don't have troops on the ground, and I don't think we should until we get a peace agreement. I also believe that American troops should participate in Bosnia in trying to enforce a peace agreement once one is achieved.

*Ms. Soren.* Considering what's happened in the last 48 hours in Gorazde—and I understand that you met with a foreign policy team this morning—would you lobby NATO allies to increase air strikes? Would you support such strikes?

*The President.* Well, I'm working on that. I met for an hour and a half this morning; I'm going to work for the rest of the day. Then I'll have an announcement about what our policy will be later. But I can't announce it now.

*Ms. Soren.* Not now? Okay. Thanks a lot.

*The President.* I understand your frustration. Let me just say, I understand your frustration, but when I took office, the United Nations was already there. Their job was to try to provide humanitarian relief. Since I have been there, the U.S. took the lead in providing the longest humanitarian airlift in history, longer than the Berlin airlift after the Second World War. We pushed NATO to get more actively involved. We have been actively involved. We have made some progress.

There is still a war on the ground. The Bosnian Government has a bigger army than the Serbs do, but the Serbs have the heavy artillery. We tried to take the heavy artillery away from Sarajevo. That has worked so far. But until they reach an agreement, both sides are still fighting on the ground. Yes, Gorazde has been attacked by the Serbs; the Bosnian Government's also made some military gains elsewhere.

Do I think what the Serbs did was right? No, I don't. The United Nations recognized Bosnia. Should they have never imposed an arms embargo on them? I don't think they should have. But right now we are doing everything we can to bring an end to the war on terms that provide the Bosnian Muslims and the people who want to be part of a multiethnic state the best deal we can possibly get, given the circumstances as they exist. And that's the best we can do. The United States cannot go over there unilaterally, send its forces in, and start fighting on the side of the Bosnian Govern-



ment. I don't think that is the right thing to do.

#### *Music and Violence*

[A participant stated that her favorite rap music artist was Snoop Doggy Dogg and asked for the President's opinion on gangsta rap.]

*The President.* I don't know. I'm not dodging your—I just don't know. I read an article about Snoop Doggy Dogg. It is not exactly my music, you know; I don't necessarily know a lot about it. [Laughter] So I read an article about it, and I was interested in the—in the article that I read he talked about his life, you know, and the time he'd done. And the writer of the article talked about the whole idea behind gangsta rap was trying to dramatize how difficult life is for young people.

So I guess the answer is, it depends on what the end of the song is. I mean, what is the purpose of it? Is it to make people understand and empathize with and try to do something about these terrible problems? Or is it to legitimize violence and criminal conduct and, ultimately, self-defeating behavior? And for me to answer your question, I'd have to know the answer to that, and I just don't know enough to answer it.

#### *Gun Exchange Programs*

[A participant discussed the effectiveness of gun exchange programs and asked what national programs could be enacted to get guns off the streets.]

*The President.* Well, actually we're looking at that. We're looking at what, if anything, we can do on a national basis to try to have a more effective handgun purchasing program or gathering program.

I'm not so concerned that maybe some people buy them on the black market and make a little profit on them if the guns are actually destroyed and taken out of commission, and if then we have more control over the circumstances under which people buy the next gun. But you're talking about tens of millions of guns. We're talking about major numbers of guns. And it seems to me if we're going to do this effectively—and I think we ought to look at it—you have to know what happens to the guns when the government takes possession of them, whether it's a city or a State or the Federal Government, what happens to them then.

I think there's a lot of merit in doing this, but it seems to me you have to melt down the guns, you've got to destroy the weapons in order for it to be worth the effort so you reduce the overall supply of black market guns.

#### *Teen Violence*

[A participant stated her view that some teens were resorting to violence as a status symbol.]

*The President.* You mean you think a lot of people do it because they think it's the thing to do now?

Q. Yes.

*The President.* I think there's something to that. But that's why I think it's so important that in the schools and wherever else young people can be found, there are real efforts to show people that it is not a status symbol, that it can ruin your life, that it can destroy somebody else's life, and that there are other more satisfactory ways to resolve your conflicts.

I mean, there was just another story today about one student shooting another student over a girl they were both interested in. Well, you know, if you live long enough, that will happen to you several times; you can't start shooting people over that. But it happens all the time now.

And I think that it's a terrible indictment of all of us, the adults in this country, that we haven't provided the kind of leadership to our young people to know that that is not the way to behave. And I think there are too many young people who just feel like they're out there on their own. How many of these films did we see where these young people say "Our parents don't care about us. No grownups care about us. Nobody really cares about us?" If you go back to that, people have to believe they're really important to somebody who really cares about them before that person can help to change their behavior. I really believe that. And I say we've got to—and that goes back to your question about the gangster rap. She asked the same question in a different way. I don't know. I just know we've got to demystify violence, and we've got to say it's a bad thing. It is not a good thing; it is a bad thing.

#### *Drugs and Crime*

[Ms. Soren discussed drugs as a major cause of random violent crime, and a participant asked

*the President if he thought mandatory sentences for drug offenders were effective.]*

*The President.* I think the mandatory sentencing program has—of course, keep in mind, that's basically a Federal program, although New York also has a mandatory sentencing program. Some States have it, and some States don't. By and large, there have been a lot of problems with mandatory sentencing programs related to drugs because they tend to treat cases that are different, the same.

The second thing I have to say is that there isn't enough drug treatment on demand. We know that appropriate drug treatment, if you also accompany it with something that a young person can do, works in more than half the cases. So I think what we need to do is to focus on having an appropriate level of punishment but also an appropriate alternative so people can move out of the life they're living. That's what I think.

So the mandatory sentencing program, there have been problems with all of them, largely because they tend to treat cases that really are different, fundamentally the same.

Now, on the other hand, if you listen to anybody talk, they'll also tell you a lot of people get parole without doing an appropriate amount of time. So the system is not as rational as it ought to be. And I do think there's some problems with the sentencing. I'd like to see some changes.

*Ms. Soren.* Many politicians are afraid to back away from the mandatory minimum sentencing that started in the eighties because it would make them look soft on crime. But if your "three strikes and you're out" becomes law, couldn't you repeal the mandatory minimums?

*The President.* I think we could certainly change it some. Let me say, one of the things, though, that frustrates people when there were no guidelines is that people who were the same were treated wildly differently. That also makes—to go back to the young man's question—this is the frustrating thing about—should there be sentencing guidelines or should there not be? When people who are different and their circumstances are different are treated the same, we all get mad, right? And we should. But when people who are the same in their offense and their degree of guilt are treated dramatically differently, we all get mad.

So there is no perfect solution to this. But I will say again, what are the important things: crime prevention; when people get in trouble, do drug education and treatment, do education; and give people something to say yes to when they get out, because there will never be a fully perfect way of sentencing.

Would I have the power to say maybe we ought to take another look at this, with "three strikes and you're out," with my long support for the capital punishment? I think so. But there is no perfect answer to the sentencing problem when you have a crime problem as big as ours is. And the real thing you've got to do is focus on what happens to the people once they're in the prison, once they're in the boot camp. And more importantly, what can you do to keep people out of the system in the first place? What can we do to prevent this?

*[A participant stated that drug addicts should not be imprisoned and suggested more drug prevention and rehabilitation programs.]*

*The President.* I agree with half of what you said. I think there should be more drug prevention programs, and I think they'd work, the drug education programs. I think there should be more drug treatment programs. But some of you, perhaps all of you know that my brother is a recovering drug addict who actually went to prison for 14 months. It is my opinion that if he hadn't been caught up in the criminal justice system, he probably would have died because his problem was so gross and so bad. And I think he would tell you the same thing if he were standing here with me.

So I don't think it's inappropriate for people to do some time for violating serious crimes when they have a drug problem, and it may actually jerk them out of the life they're in and help to save their life. But I would say two things. Number one, you don't want to overdo the length of time they have to serve; if fundamentally they're not drug pushers, they're really drug users and abusers and addicts, you can overdo the length of time. And number two, you've got to have adequate drug treatment as well as preparation for living a different life if you want a different kind of behavior coming out of the prison than you got going in. That, it seems to me, is the biggest problem.

So a little time won't hurt people who are in the process of killing themselves anyway, if you make the most of them. But if you just

send them to prison for a too-long sentence and you never do drug treatment and they get nothing when they come out, then you're right, it's self-defeating.

[Following a commercial break, Ms. Soren conducted a poll of the audience to determine if they thought the Government's priority should be programs and education to prevent crime, or punishment of criminals.]

Ms. Stewart. Somewhat overwhelming for prevention in the room, President Clinton. Are you surprised by that at all?

The President. No, because I think a lot of young people know others who have been to prison and haven't been deterred and because I think the problem seems so overwhelming. People know that you've got to change behavior, you have to change people from the inside out. You have to change community by community, school by school.

My own belief is that we shouldn't make a choice, because the two things can work together. You can be tough, and you can be compassionate. You can be oriented toward prevention, but when somebody does something really horrible, you just can't walk away from it. You can't. So I think you have to do both.

But one thing I'd like to say to all of you who are here—there is a limit to what the Government can do unless people are working at grassroots level. And every one of you, if you really care about this, could make a contribution to making the problem better. Is there an organization in your school? Is there an organization in your community? If you believe in prevention, are you doing something to try to touch somebody else? Because most people have to be rescued one at a time, just the way they get lost, one at a time. And there will never be enough police officers; there will never be enough Government workers to do this. So I would just urge you—we had one young lady from Baltimore there who said she was going to work on setting up a community center. I think that there are things that you can do to give people something to say yes to that will make this prevention strategy work. And all the crime bill funds are basically just designed to give you the right, you and people like you all over America, to get together with people who care about this and do something about it in school after school and neighborhood after neighborhood.

Ms. Soren. So even though there's approximately \$16 billion for police and prisons, some of that money is preventative and treatment and—

The President. In the House bill, I think, there is about \$7 billion for prevention. There's a lot of money for prevention, much more than ever before from the Federal Government.

Ms. Soren. One thing that we didn't get a chance to talk about, but there were a lot of questions about was the role of families in preventing violence. Can you legislate a better family? Can you—

The President. No. No, but you can have pro-family policies. A lot of this violence occurs within the family. And you can have policies, for example, that don't push people into welfare. We lowered taxes for working people, one in six American families, for working people whose incomes are very low and who have children. We're trying to pass health care reform so people will never have to go on welfare just to get health care. We passed the family leave law, so when there are problems in the family, people can get off work and take a little time off work and tend to their problems with their children without losing their jobs.

In other words, the Government can do things that say we want to support family. And with more and more single-parent families and with more parents having to work, even when their children are very young, we have to be thinking all the time about how we can do things to help people succeed as parents and as workers. And then, when families get in trouble, we need to work on how we can preserve the family, not just how we can deal with the kids after it falls apart.

None of these things are easy, but frankly, if all of the families in this country were functional, we'd have less than half of the problems we've got today. I think all of you know that. We'd still have some problems, but we'd have less than half the problems we've got. And so we have to really keep that in mind.

[Following a commercial break, Ms. Soren invited participants to ask brief questions on any topic they chose.]

#### *Popular Culture and Private Life*

Q. Mr. President, I'm curious to know how your meeting with Pearl Jam went.

*The President.* It was great. [Laughter] My daughter was jealous that she wasn't in the White House that day.

Q. Mr. President, do you speak any other languages?

*The President.* I studied German in college, and I can still read it and understand it a little bit, but my speaking is way down.

Q. Mr. President, I was wondering if you'd ever asked your daughter not to wear a specific piece of clothing to school.

*The President.* No, I haven't, although we've had a lot of general conversations about clothing. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, the world's dying to know, is it boxers or briefs? [Laughter]

*The President.* Usually briefs. I can't believe she did that. [Laughter]

Q. How do you feel about the Secret Service following you around everywhere you go?

*The President.* It's hard sometimes. But they do a good job protecting me and my family. And it's their job, so I'm getting used to it. But it's hard.

Ms. Soren. Do you keep a diary?

*The President.* No. I try to collect my recollections on a periodic basis, but I don't keep a daily diary.

Q. Mr. President, what was the best advice your mother ever gave you?

*The President.* Never give up.

Q. Mr. President, first of all, I want to say that I think you're great. Second of all, I want you to say, "yes," "no," or "I don't know." Will you run in '96?

*The President.* Probably. [Laughter]

Q. Do you have a charity you contribute to regularly?

*The President.* Yes, I do. We, my wife and I, contribute to a shelter for battered women and their children back home, regularly, and a number of other charities. We always give money to the Children's Defense Fund.

Q. Mr. President, what's your idea of the perfect day?

*The President.* A good book, a good game of golf, a long run, dinner with my wife and daughter, and movies with friends. You've got to stay up a long time to do all that. [Laughter]

Q. What do you think about the Clinton jokes?

*The President.* The what?

Q. What do you think about the Clinton jokes?

*The President.* Some are funny, and some aren't.

#### *Presidential Nominations*

Q. Do you regret not giving Lani Guinier the chance to defend her views to the Senate?

*The President.* Well, she defended them to a lot of individual Senators. The problem was we were facing a very divisive fight over an issue in which she and I had a fundamental disagreement, of which I was unaware at the time she was nominated. She might have been able to get confirmed, but based on what I was hearing from the Democrats, I doubt it. I think she's a very fine woman. She's one of the best civil rights lawyers in the country, and she's going to have a great career.

Q. In light of Justice Blackmun's recent decision, what do you think the chances are that you will replace the vacant seat with a minority that will, in fact, represent the needs and the concerns of minorities like Thurgood Marshall once did?

*The President.* Well, I'm going to try to make a good appointment, but I haven't made up my mind who to appoint yet. I think Justice Ginsberg, whom I appointed last time, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, will be terrific. And I will try to make—I hope when I'm done, you will think that all my Federal judge appointments not only are the most diverse but are the most excellent in American history. And we're on the way to having the most diverse and the most highly qualified appointments.

Ms. Soren. Can you give us your short list?

*The President.* I could, but I won't. [Laughter]

#### *Popular Culture and Private Life*

Q. Mr. President, I was wondering, what is your favorite song, and do you think you could sing a little bit of it?

*The President.* I have a lot of favorite songs, but I love the song that Ray Charles won the R&B Grammy for this year, "A Song For You," a song written by Leon Russell. I don't know if you know it, but it's an unbelievable song.

Q. Would you sing—

*The President.* No. [Laughter] "Our love is in a place that has no space or time. I love you for my life. You are a friend of mine." Do you know the song? It's a wonderful song, but he sings it better than I do.

Q. Do you support Howard Stern's candidacy for Governor of New York?

*The President.* I support his right to run. [Laughter]

*Ms. Stewart.* Do you have a favorite Biblical passage that means a lot to you?

*The President.* "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Galatians 6:9.

*Q.* Mr. President, what's your favorite type of running shoes?

*The President.* What did you say?

*Q.* What's your favorite type of running shoes?

*The President.* New Balance, and—I normally wear New Balance or Asics. I like them both. They're slightly different. I need something that a heavy guy can run in without falling over. [Laughter]

#### *The Presidency*

*Q.* What has been your toughest obstacle as President?

*The President.* I think sort of the culture of Washington, a lot of partisanship and a lot of negativism and focus on process, who's in and out and who's up and down; instead of let's all get together, pull the American people together, put the country first.

#### *Admiral Frank Kelso*

*Ms. Soren.* Do you think Admiral Kelso should get all his stars when he retires, despite his role in the Tailhook scandal?

*The President.* Based on the facts as I know them, I do. I believe that the evidence is not sufficiently compelling that he knew about it and that he was sufficiently culpable to deny him his stars. That's a very severe thing to do, and I don't believe the evidence warrants it. That's based on the Inspector General's report in the Pentagon.

#### *Popular Culture and Private Life*

*Q.* Mr. President, who's your favorite jazz saxophonist?

*The President.* Boy, that's tough. Probably Stan Getz.

*Q.* Mr. President, how do you feel about your likeness on "Beavis and Butt-head"?

*The President.* My what?

*Q.* Mr. President, how do you feel about your likeness on "Beavis and Butt-head"?

*The President.* Sometimes I like it; sometimes I don't. [Laughter]

*Ms. Soren.* We're about out of time. Thank you, Mr. President, for joining us today and continuing the dialog with young people.

*The President.* Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:30 a.m. in the Kalorama Studio. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Pearl Jam and Howard Stern, and Adm. Frank B. Kelso II, USN, Chief of Naval Operations. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

## Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters on Bosnia

*April 19, 1994*

*The President.* Good afternoon. This morning I met for an hour and a half with our national security team to discuss what our options were to regain the momentum in Bosnia for a peaceful settlement. Several options were presented to me, and we discussed some others. When we adjourned the meeting, I asked the team to refine three points and to work on some of the options and to come back and meet with me again at 3:30 this afternoon. So we will meet again.

In the meanwhile, as I'm sure you know, President Yeltsin has issued a statement, which I very much appreciate and which I think is

very helpful, calling on the Serbs to honor their commitments to the Russians to withdraw from Gorazde, to allow U.N. personnel back in Gorazde, and to resume the negotiations toward a peaceful settlement.

We are working closely on this. And I believe that we have a chance to build on what has been done in the last several weeks in and around Sarajevo and with the agreement between the Croats and the Bosnian Muslims. And we will just keep working on it.

As I said, I meet again at 3:30 p.m., and I'm hopeful that we'll be able to make some constructive moves over the next couple of days.